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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church throughout the world, following the lead of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, has begun to define its mission and identity in terms of the rich concept of evangelization. Father Herve Carrier states that evangelization has two essential components: (1) inculturation; and (2) liberation. Inculturation is more than forming a multicultural perspective in ministry. Inculturation speaks to truly making the Gospel message come alive in the hearts of all people. This volume contains a collection of reflections on the topic of inculturation, which is one of the more prominent themes of the new "General Directory for Catechesis." Following an Introduction, there are seven chapters: (1) "The Evangelization of Cultures and Catechesis" (Allan Figueroa Deck); (2) "Inculturation of the Faith: A Challenge in Our Day" (Joanne S. Saunders); (3) "Inculturation and Pastoral Ministers" (Frank Lucido); (4) "Culture as Vehicle of the Gospel: An Asian Perspective" (Cris V. Villapando); (5) "The Journey Home: Inculturation in Native America (V. Paul Ojibway); (6) "Inculturation: An African American Perspective" (Beatrice Cunningham); and (7) "Inculturation in the Hispanic Cultures" (Frank Lucido). (BT)

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REFLECTIONS ON INCULTURATION

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Frank Lucido, Ed.D.
Editor

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Reflections on Inculturation

Frank Lucido, Ed.D.
Editor

National Catholic Educational Association

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Pentecost 2002
Robert Colbert
Executive Director
Department of Religious Education

Introduction

This is a collection of reflections on the topic of inculturation, which is one of the more prominent themes of the new *General Directory for Catechesis.* As we examine this theme, we find that there are many aspects that need to be considered. There are also many social science areas that contribute to a deeper understanding of the theme.

In examining inculturation, the *General Directory for Catechesis* reminds us that,

> The Word of God became man, a concrete man, in space and time, and rooted in a specific culture: Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom he lived. This is the original "inculturation" of the word of God and is the model of all evangelization by the Church, called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. (*GDC* # 109).

With this concept in mind, the following reflections in this book, first of all, look at an overview of the concept of inculturation and all its implications to us in ministry, especially in catechesis. In the second chapter, a reflection on inculturation as experienced first hand through an experience of church in another country is related. The third chapter attempts to address inculturation from the perspective of the attitude and skills needed by persons in ministry. Knowing that all of us in ministry are truly committed to reaching out to all cultures in our parishes or schools, the subsequent four chapters present some aspects to consider in inculturating the Gospel in different cultures. Although we know that there is diversity even

within a given culture, the suggestions as to how to inculturate the Gospel in the Asian community, the Native American community, the African American community, and the Hispanic community will provide an awareness of some of the fundamental needs of that culture.

We know that inculturation is much more than just forming a multicultural perspective in ministry. Inculturation speaks to truly making the Gospel message come alive in the hearts of all people. This book will hopefully be a resource that can assist on that journey of continuing to build the Kingdom of God.

Frank Lucido, Ed.D.

CHAPTER 1

The Evangelization of Cultures and Catechesis

Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J.

Setting the Stage

The Church throughout the world, following the lead of the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, has begun to define its mission and identity in terms of the rich concept of evangelization. Father Hervé Carrier, S.J., tells us that evangelization has two essential components: inculturation and liberation. He summarizes the thought of Pope John Paul II in this regard: "There are two principal and complementary aspects which correspond to the two levels on which the Church carries on its activity: that of the *evangelization of cultures* (or inculturation) and that of the *defense of man and his cultural development* (or liberation). Both tasks demand that new means for dialogue between the Church and the cultures of our time be developed."[1] The Holy Father refers to the Church as being in its entirety evangelizing. This remarkable development is reflected in the first section of the *General Directory for Catechesis* where catechesis is viewed as an integral aspect of the larger picture which is evangelization.

There is an alarming lag, however, in the familiarity with and acceptance of the change that the overarching concept of evangelization is bringing to every aspect of the church's life including catechesis. Religious educators continue to work out of paradigms that incorporate evangelization in a merely additive way. Yet evan-

gelization in its two dimensions of inculturation and liberation goes to the very heart of catechesis, as well. This lag is not surprising. Interestingly enough, the lag in truly assimilating the concept of evangelization is also seen in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*! The very word *evangelization* is virtually absent from this contemporary resource. The *General Catechetical Directory*, however, takes evangelization very seriously. So it stands to reason that there is still much lack of understanding, uneasiness, and unevenness in the way evangelization is used or not used in virtually all levels of Church life. Catechetical ministries are still not very familiar or comfortable with the implications of inculturation and liberation for Catholic education and catechesis.

This lag is especially notable in the United States. Theologians, with a few exceptions, have generally not taken the idea very seriously. Mainstream theological reflection in the Untied States (and in Europe, as well) tends to presume the hegemony of modern or postmodern cultures. The source of the tension is cultural and social class. As a result many church "movers and shakers" in the developed countries have little patience for the diverse cultures of the world which are more traditional and still reflect pre-modern values. The European and North American vision is set on pluralism and other issues that arise in postmodern, developed, and middle class societies. The horizon for church leadership tends to be that of the middle class. Yet large segments of the church are working class and are made up of people at various stages of modernization. The very concept of evangelization sometimes grates on mainstream, especially progressive or liberal Catholics, who confuse it with proselytism. Many catechetical leaders in the United States are part of this progressive but somewhat disconnected mainstream.

Catechetical leaders are striving to implement evangelization's thrust toward liberation or action on behalf of justice. They are not always very successful. The justice dimension is often not presented as integral to the Church's mission and therefore central to all catechetics. It is, rather, often added on as another interesting and optional sidelight. If it is dealt with at all, evangelization is dis-

cussed as an interesting addition but not as the overarching framework within which all the Church's activities are to be understood and measured. A cursory review of the contents of leading U.S. catechetical journals reveals that evangelization is merely another topic that enriches or adds something, not the overarching framework that grounds and inspires everything the Church is about, including catechesis.

In the effort to assert evangelization's central role in every aspect of the Church's life, the current stress on multiculturalism is not as helpful as some might think. Multiculturalism is often confused with inculturation and used as a substitute for it. The Church, in the documents of the Magisterium, hardly ever speaks of multiculturalism. That is a subject that emerged in the secular world, in the context of education, politics, and business. There is an authentic multiculturalism that seeks to find respectful ways for the diversity of cultures and races to interact and even be in solidarity. There is another kind of multiculturalism, however, that remains at a superficial level and does not truly reach out to each and every person in terms of their cultural and religious values as true inculturation demands. To do that one must enter into a process of cultural openness that begins with recognizing and honoring each and every culture and allowing each one to feel secure in its own identity. Sometimes the drive toward multiculturalism has short-circuited the needs of the various cultural groups for attention and diluted the effect of the community's leadership by depriving it of native leaders in the name of unity in diversity.

In the United States this means not placing the dominant U.S. culture above others. For from the point of view of inculturation, all cultures are of equal value and all stand in judgment before the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the United States this idea is very difficult to accept because North Americans are schooled in the civic notion of the melting pot, which is at variance with the Christian understanding of how cultures properly relate to one another. U.S. Catholics must struggle to put the Christian notion of evangelization above civic notions of assimilation and nationalism.

How can one begin to wrestle with the demands that evangelization of culture makes upon the catechist? Much can be said here. For a starter, it is useful to reflect in more detail on the nature of evangelization itself. Then it will be helpful to place the evangelization process within the context of the culture of modernity that limits and defines so much of the world today. To this must be added an awareness of the emerging postmodern culture which is driving many of the changes we see today.

What Is Evangelization?

The evangelization of cultures, or *inculturation*, is the process by which the gospel, the Word of God, is incarnated in human life. This is an encounter between the Good News of Jesus Christ and culture. Inculturation is the word coined in the 1960's that refers to this encounter. The Second Vatican Council's vision of the church's identity and mission gave rise to the need for a more precise understanding of how the gospel message really penetrates the ways of living, feeling, thinking, and the customs of a people. In the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *(Ad gentes, No.* 10) we read: "If the church is to be in a position to offer all [women and] men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the [women and] men among who he lived." Another rich source for the emerging notion of inculturation was the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *(Gaudium et spes, Nos. 56-62)* which clearly speaks of the church's identity and mission in terms of the encounter with cultures.

The inculturation process has two poles: the Gospel message on the one hand and on the other, the specific culture of the people or community one wishes to evangelize. Pope Paul VI and the bishops gathered for the Synod of 1974 produced what has become the fundamental statement of the Magisterium on this issue: *On Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi).* Here

the church defines its mission in terms of evangelization and clearly asserts that the church in our times desires to understand itself in terms of its role of proclaiming the gospel to cultures. This document is arguably the single most influential one to emerge in these four decades of renewal since the Second Vatican Council. In it, Pope Paul VI refers to the encounter of the gospel with cultures as "the drama of our time." (20).

Pope John Paul II has consistently and creatively pursued the idea of evangelization of cultures, making it, indeed, one of the strongest themes of his papacy. In 1982 he established the Pontifical Council on Culture to promote inculturation activity not only in foreign missions but rather as an ongoing process that characterizes every aspect of the church's life. The Pope has stressed the notion of the "new evangelization" which builds on that of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI. The new evangelization refers to the urgent need for new expressions and methods and more enthusiasm in the way in which the faith is communicated today.[2]

Inculturation and Modernity

It is important to note that the church includes modern culture as an essential dialogue partner in the evangelizing process. In today's world the culture of modernity is hegemonic. It arose in Europe but its quintessential expression is North American. This pervasive culture competes with and often overwhelms the ethnic and national cultures throughout the globe. It has its own symbols, rituals, myths, and narratives. Modern social, economic, and political forms are penetrating heretofore isolated regions of the world. The free market system brings with it many drastic changes – not all of them good – in the way people live. Mass media in the form of film, videos, television, and radio are powerful conduits for the communication of modern culture. The internet is now taking the modern experience into the homes and businesses of humanity everywhere on the planet.

The evangelization of cultures requires that the gospel mes-

sage provide a critical lens for the often overpowering and pervasive influences of modernity. This means that both the positive accomplishments of modern culture be recognized (its drive for equality, democratic tendencies, economic productivity, and accomplishments in the field of health) as well as its negatives (extreme individualism, breakdown of families, materialism, consumerism, and grossly inequitable distribution and use of the world's resources). The Church's Magisterium has often referred to the negative aspects of modern culture as "the culture of death."[3] In the effort to forge a coherent critique of modern culture, especially its death-dealing aspects, Catholic social teaching is an indispensable tool.

Inculturation and Postmodernity

The term *postmodern* also refers to a worldwide culture like that of modernity, one that exists along with the diverse ethnic cultures, often deeply penetrating and transforming them. The collapse of colonialism, the failure of the modern communist experiments, the incapacity of modern technology and science to satisfy the deepest longings of human beings, indeed, the destructiveness that came on the heels of modernity, including the horrors of Auschwitz and Nagasaki, have all conspired to create a strong critique of the modern world and its cultural paradigms. There is a new interest in spirituality exemplified in movements, such as the New Age, which nevertheless, are often uncomfortable with organized or institutional religion. Institutional religion in all its forms is tainted by its complicity with modern culture and its historical sins. As a result postmodern culture is highly individualistic and selective. It fails to integrate what it values in anything like community or tradition. It therefore perpetuates the fragmentation of culture that began with the modern age. The evangelization of cultures requires a dialogue with this postmodern mindset as well.

Closely linked to postmodern culture is the worldwide culture of youth. Catechists must attend to this distinctive and highly influential form of culture, one that permeates the way that young

people think, feel, and act even in the most remote corners of the earth. Pope John Paul II's fabulously successful youth encounters are one creative example of how to establish a dialogue with this culture from a Gospel point of view.

Steps in Faith's Encounter with Cultures

The church proposes a method for advancing the encounter of Christian faith with cultures: dialogue. The encounter that inculturation requires is therefore a respectful one. It begins with a recognition of the inherent dignity of each and every human being and of all cultures, including the modern and postmodern cultures. The insistence upon the dialogical nature of the church's mission is not new. Actually, one can trace this conviction back to the earliest period of Christianity. St. Paul won the debate with the Judaizers regarding the openness of the Christian call to all peoples. The Catholic Church is *catholic*, or universal, precisely because it learned early in its existence that whatever it encountered in the various cultures that was not explicitly contrary to the scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition could be subsumed. While it is true that at times this principle was forgotten or not adequately followed, for example, in the evangelization of the Americas or even in this century in Africa and Asia, the dialogical principle has resulted in the gradual realization of a truly global church. St. Augustine of Hippo said it clearly in the early fifth century in his treatise on preaching the Gospel, *De doctrina Christiana*: "One must love the people, their customs, narratives, and rituals, that is, their culture, if one is to successfully proclaim the Gospel to them."[4]

To love a culture means to penetrate its values, myths, customs, rituals, and ways of being, and to do this with sympathy and openness. The globalization of the church and its effective presence on all the continents today with growing numbers of non-western members, demand that the church possess more than ever the capacity for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. We must insist, moreover, on the inadequacy of a purely negative attitude toward modern and postmodern culture. One can discover in these hege-

monic forces positive values that indeed find an echo in the gospel, for example, the drive for human rights, gender equality, and political and economic democracy. Nor can the church lose sight of the important advances brought by modernity in the areas of science, technology, and medicine.

Inculturation, however, requires that the peoples of the earth be afforded the opportunity to personally experience the presence and power of Jesus Christ in their lives. Yet this experience must not remain merely personal or private. Christian faith in the person and promise of Jesus Christ requires an outward vision of the world, the ability to read the signs of the times as the Second Vatican Council taught. Consequently, inculturation cannot take place without the ongoing analysis of reality, a process of reflection that uses the tools of the human sciences. It is not enough to remain locked into our Catholic heritage nor abandon ourselves to contemporary trends. Respect for the Church's Tradition; attention to the Word of God, to the Magisterium, and especially to Catholic social teaching; and serious theological reflection are essential elements of a truly evangelizing attitude toward the world today. Discernment is also necessary. That means that the church's outreach must always be joined with serious study, reflection, and, more than anything else, prayer. The never-ending task of evangelization or inculturation and liberation cannot occur outside the context of vibrant communities of faith, whether they be parishes, small ecclesial communities, religious communities of men or women, and, of course, strong Christian families.

Inculturation is a process inspired by the Incarnation of the Divine Word. It leads to conversion or transformation of feelings, attitudes, understanding, and human behaviors. This process becomes concrete in the search for a more just socioeconomic order and in political struggles in solidarity with the poorest and most marginal members of society. To evangelize cultures is to transform the human hearts of individuals. It goes beyond that, however, and assumes a structural form that reaches entire communities and their social, economic, and political systems. Political responsibility

inspired by the teaching of Jesus Christ and the church, rather than by passing ideologies of left and right or on narrow interests of nationality, gender, culture, social class, and race, is a fundamental expression of authentic Christian discipleship. The Bishops' Synod of 1971 reminded us that "...action on behalf of justice is a constitutive element of the proclamation of the gospel."[5]

A church that is in its entirety evangelizing will not come about by mere study and good will. When the Christian faithful (priests, religious, catechists and other ecclesial lay ministers, and the laity in general) learn to submerge themselves in the reality of others, when more and more people attempt to learn other people's languages, and experience the life of other social classes, especially the poor, then the real conditions for evangelization will come about. This requires an ability to take risks. There is no mission activity without risk. Every form of hostility between men and women, races, ethnic groups, social classes, religions, and sexual orientations must be transformed into hospitality. That is the way to foster the appropriate dialogue, respectful and serious, that the gospel requires. In this way, the work of creation, redemption, and liberation that originates in the life of the triune God takes flesh here and now. All evangelization of cultures is oriented toward conversion or change that is both personal and structural (social, economic, and political). Evangelization looks to the future and foresees the fullness of time when the Lord Jesus will return in glory and all things will be renewed in him.

Conclusion

The reluctance of churches in developed countries to adopt a truly vigorous spirit of evangelization is due perhaps to lingering ethnocentrism and racism, to social class discrimination, and to an unfortunate tendency of some churches, religious congregations of men and women, and schools to assume a "maintenance mode" of existence. They are heavily institutionalized and consequently experience themselves not as mission evangelizing enterprises but

as establishments. Such a mindset is, of course, fatal for the apostolic character of the Church. Catechists, for their part, will be well advised to become familiar with the evangelization of cultures as foundational for everything they are about. In this way, they will become effective evangelizers, people with a comprehensive vision of the Church's task.

The experience of God in the world is mediated through culture; and in a certain sense, development in faith is more a matter of cultural development than it is of individual development. For as long as catechists are not aware of culture (theirs or that of others) they will teach in ways that merely varnish or place an outer coating on children, youth, and adults. They will be like Penelope in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: weaving the garment by day and then unraveling it by night. The Church tells us that its task, however, is to evangelize cultures, which means going down to the depth of the person, to those underlying metaphors, symbols, rituals, stories, and practices communally shared by a people. We have a long way to go in creating effective approaches to catechesis that at once (1) tap into the extraordinary power of culture to motivate and change humans at the deepest levels of their being, and (2) further God's Reign by promoting lasting social, economic, and political change along the lines of justice and peace. This is exactly what the Church seeks to do. This is the life-giving mission to which all the baptized, but especially the catechist, are called by Christ himself.

ENDNOTES

[1] H. Carrier, "The Ultimate Challenge of the World-Church." *The Church and Culture Since Vatican II*. ed. Joseph Gremillion. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. p. 28.

[2] see the *Message of the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops to the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean*, Nos. 7-12 of the Opening Address of the Holy Father. Origins 22,19 (Oct. 22, 1992).

[3] *Address of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II to Members of the Pontifical Academy for Life*. Saturday, March 3, 2001. #2.

[4] "Saint Augustine-Christian Instruction." *The Fathers of the Church*. vol. 4. Roy J. Deferrari, ed. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Presss, 1947.

[5] "Justice in the World: Synod of Bishops Second General Assembly," November 30, 1971, in *The Gospel of Peace and Justice*, ed. Joseph Gremillion. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976. p. 514.

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CHAPTER 2

INCULTURATION OF THE FAITH: A CHALLENGE IN OUR DAY

Joanne S. Sanders

While Director of Religious Education for the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, I was privileged to serve for eight years as a representative from Region X on the National Advisory Committee for Adult Religious Education (NACARE) to the Department of Education, United States Catholic Conference. During that time, I participated in three International Consultations on Adult Faith Formation, in Canada, in the United States, and in India. These interactions were enlightening not just for the information obtained but also from the experience of shared faith in a multicultural context. The attendees explored a particular facet of the Church's catechetical agenda in a way that enabled us to live in a microcosmic global community for a few days.

Since the United States became a nation, the American culture has consisted of many different cultures. To this day, I believe a major challenge for us as citizens is our inability to define who we are. What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States? The cultural background of our citizenry is so diverse, rooted in every continent of the world such that we are sometimes overwhelmed and reluctant to identify what is truly unique within our own culture. The American way is built on individual initiative rather than on community. This reluctance to explore the concept of unity in diversity is experienced in our daily living as well as in the realm of Church.

Who are we as the Body of Christ? How can the diversity of the gifts of different cultures affect our expressions of faith?

I have had the privilege of traveling to many countries in Central and South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia to experience culture on a soil other than the United States. This interaction with people around the world has broadened my personal horizon. The People of God are far more than the neighborhood or community in which we live. Even if our daily experience is lived in a multicultural context, it is still seen through an American lens. It was in dialogue with the participants of the International Consultations that I had the opportunity for a deeper insight as to who we are as the Body of Christ. We are truly called to be people in relationship.

A paragraph in Maria Harris' book, *Proclaim Jubilee*, page 11, says it best:

> When the World Council of Churches met in Sydney, Australia, more than a decade ago, Krister Stendahl, then dean of Harvard Divinity School, noted that whenever an issue was brought to the table, it got four characteristic responses: Latin Americans responded with customary passion; Africans asked what the implications were for the community; Asians reflected quietly in contemplative mindfulness; and North Americans inquired, "What are we going to do?" The point of this recollection is not to set these responses in conflict. Instead it is to note that we need all four perspectives. We need passion *and* community *and* contemplative being *and* active intervention...[1]

Some questions I asked upon my return from each of these consultations were: What effect does our understanding of cultural diversity have on my ministry? How can we motivate, empower, and support not only the leadership of the body but each participant as well? My immediate reaction was – we need everyone. Each individual's gifts and talents are available for the greater good of the

community. Individuality allows us to develop the self for the good of the other. This is an alien concept in our individualistic, secularized world. I have learned that an enriched community happens in its diversity. And in that diversity we are called to dialogue and collaborate with one another. God invites us to be a community of communities, a vibrant Eucharistic community – the Church.

I focused on three areas which may be helpful in understanding each person's call to become the Body of Christ: vision, collaboration, and empowerment.

> Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily.
> For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and will not disappoint;
> If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.
> Habakkuk 2:3.[2]

Jesus gave us a vision of the Kingdom of God. He clearly modeled a way of living that has challenged us over the centuries. His message is motivating Christians around the world, not just those with the American experience and knowledge. It is difficult sometimes to realize that we are not the center of the universe. People of many cultures are able to follow the way of Christ, each in his or her particular place, as well. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states:

> Thus, with inculturation, evangelization encounters one of its greatest challenges. In the light of the Gospel, the church must appropriate all the positive values of culture and of cultures and reject those elements that impede development of the true potential of persons and peoples. (#21).

Vision

How can we inculturate the vision of the Gospel in our particular setting? Some definitions are in order. What is culture?

Culture is the sum total of a people's social and psychological being which shapes the way they perceive, relate to, and interpret themselves and the world, including values, language, customs, food, child rearing practices, educational systems, history, political structure and religious expression. What is inculturation? It is an ongoing interaction between faith and culture. It is a way of looking at the customs, rites and rituals of people to discover in them the saving presence of God.

First, as ministers in the Church, we must draw closer to Jesus. Proclaiming the vision He professed can only happen if we comprehend the Gospel message. His invitation to model our way of living after His teachings demands surrender, humility, and belief that we have been gifted with faith. The grace of our baptism compels us to respond. Like the Eucharist, we must consume the vision and write it in our hearts. Allowing the Spirit to enter our lives can impel us to work toward the kingdom in today's world. Positive, committed people move in a positive direction.

Secondly, we must revere our diversity. Take the time to learn about other people – their cultural backgrounds, their family relationships, their religious expression, the way they understand life. It is all well and good to experience another culture's food and ritual but we must go much deeper, understanding who we are and whose we are.

Collaboration and Empowerment

Focus on collaboration. We talk a lot about collaboration in ministry but I dare say we practice it poorly. Somehow, the competitive spirit seems to creep in. Collaboration means to work together toward a common goal. A catechetical staff works together, a team works together, and a community is called to work together for the common good. There are ways to collaborate that can turn the world upside down. I share an experience I had at the International Consultation in India as an example of true collaboration and empowerment.

A priest (he is unnamed for his protection because Christians are still persecuted in places of the world for their work with the poor) from one of the states of India with over twenty-five years in the priesthood has dedicated himself to working in social service ministry. He reflected with us on how he has learned to work *with* the poor, not *for* the poor. He shared his story with me. When he first began to work in social services after the Second Vatican Council, he and his comrades designed programs to assist the poor with material goods and services. After all was said and done, the poor were no better off than they were before, still in the same socio-economic state. This priest is a man with a vision. He explained: "Our life is one measured by rhythms, time, seasons, etc. Beyond these rhythms life goes on as if it cannot be contained in mere categories. We are on pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is the search for an experience, the dwelling of a deity and the blessings of the deity. A useful experience is like a raw material that has to be processed and shaped. Unless one reflects over one's experience critically with reference to one's vision and goal and sees in it what one can learn to proceed better, that experience is but a repetition of events continuously in one's life." My priest friend's vision is one that has taught him several lessons, made several corrections in day to day life, added new insights into the future, and given rise to a theory, methodology, and practice. He said, "I had to give up my pet ideas which had no grounding in reality and accept as wisdom other ones which I thought earlier were stupid ones." He calls it his dialectical process of learning with the poor.

Many years ago during a drought in India, Father was over-seeing relief services for those affected. His assistants provided the needed services and the people experienced short-term relief, but their situation overall had not changed. He began to analyze what was happening. He noted that people viewed the poor as incapable of doing anything by or for themselves. The poor are considered as recipients, not as active agents who can solve the problems of their lives. The poor have basic needs, are willing to use their own initiative, and give of their resources no matter how meager. The

poor were viewed through only one lens, that of income. They were not seen through their social, religio-cultural, or political spheres. He discovered that social services ministered to the poor individually, not as a society. By doing this, no efforts were made to change the systems that oppressed them. Social services are dependent on resources from those who hold the socioeconomic and political power, and these people cannot, or will not, bring about social transformation. Persons rendering services to the poor are forced to change their focus, because those who oppress are those in power.

My priest friend began to explore new approaches to the challenge. At first, through the use of Paulo Freire's theory of conscientization, he educated himself and others in Freire's methodology of awareness building. He sent his fellow workers into the field to ask the illiterate poor to name words that described their plight. After gathering the most mentioned words, which according to Freire are the problematic words that describe the life issues of the poor, pictures were drawn to depict contrasting realities of the poor. Assisted by animators (the Indian term for facilitators), who were imbued with a new vision of their society, they began to understand with the poor their life situation in an analytical way. New perspectives emerged; the poor were motivated to act collectively to change their situation. At first in small ways, qualitative change began to happen. Examples: the poor were able to tackle many of their basic needs like clean drinking water, improved roads, and street lighting; they became bonded laborers who could secure loans to purchase seed for crops and animals for breeding, thereby increasing their wages. Their creative potential began to work toward a vision far greater than what was initially imagined. As their economic condition began to improve, they were learning how the system was oppressive and how they could make the system work for them. However, this was not enough. Change was happening in a micro way but not in the macro realm, that of the society.

Father brought the animators back together and reduced the size of the group to a minimum. He said, "If we really trust the poor, we must enable them to become animators to their fellow poor who

are not yet exposed to the awareness process." He then empowered the poor to become leaders. He organized them into teams of ten with a leader. The leader was responsible for sustaining the group in a process of awareness. The leaders were responsible for linking the group up with five other groups forming a neighborhood and then a village grouping. The amount of change became exponentially visible as these groups began to grow. People were empowered to bring about change for themselves. These groups had influence in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres of their lives. Upon critical reflection, he discovered that the poor could take their lives into their own hands. When this happened, their self-image improved. Resources were tapped within their own group (the multiplication of the loaves and fishes), they became part of the leadership system by clustering together for the common good, and their lot in life improved.

This is not the end of the story. Father continues to collaborate and to empower in order to further the vision begun in his unrest. This is a long and arduous journey. The long-term goal is social transformation on a macro level. Once the movement is set into motion, it has to grow on its own achieving the goals articulated by it.

How many stories have we read in the Scriptures that prove this out – the parables of the mustard seed, the yeast, the grains of wheat? Jesus constantly tells this story again and again. The poor (and the powerful) are always with us.

Traveling half way around the world, I met a priest who told of his experience that refocused my own thinking in ministry. I am compelled to tell his story because it can assist each of us as catechetical leaders in creating an environment of vision, collaboration, and empowerment in the Church.

As catechetical leaders, how can we respond and create arenas for collaboration and empowerment? We can:

Love God and our neighbor as ourselves.
We experience God in the cultural context in which we live—be mindful that our neighbor does also.

Revere our neighbor.
The Gospel challenges us to respect each person and to value the dignity of human life. There is room for everyone in the family of God and in the ministry that we do. Invite others into a shared ministry.

Develop a better understanding of who we are as the Body of Christ.
God created each person with unique gifts and talents to be shared for the common good. We need each other to become the whole Body of Christ. Let us be receptive to the uniqueness of each person. Take time to learn about the cultures that are represented in your region, explore beyond your comfort zone developing relationships with people who are different from you.

Learn from the good in a culture and challenge its weaknesses.
People of every culture live life seeing through the lens of their particular experience. The Catholic expression influences their response in faith as does their cultural context. Perhaps we do not realize how the society of our country influences our values, mores, practices, and more. Help people identify their context, understand its implications, understand the teachings of Scripture and the Catholic Tradition, and apply this understanding to a lived experience of the faith, so that we may change society and not be led by it.

Seek unity in diversity not uniformity.
Develop relationships with people not to make them think and act as you do, but to draw from their unique thoughts and actions. Remember that each person, each cultural expression, has something to offer.

Empower the powerless.
Whether we are rich or poor, slave or free, man or woman, Jew or gentile, Jesus challenges us to be for others—to be servants. In ministry we are here to be servant leaders, to serve rather than be served.

Work for social transformation.
Challenge those with power to become sensitive to the powerless and to change the systems that are oppressive. Teach the oppressed how to do for themselves. Provide them with education and training. Encourage the oppressed not to become oppressors.

Be a person of vision.
Jesus constantly proclaimed the Kingdom of God. How can His vision be our vision in our everyday interactions with one another?

Collaborate and empower others into leadership.
Listen, dialogue, and encourage others to respond to the call of their baptism. Collaboration entails openness to the other. Work together with other individuals, offices, and organizations. Everyone has something valuable to contribute. The more we let go of our "turf," the more creative others are allowed to become. Everyone benefits.

Design programs and processes that are liberating.
Invite people to share their life experience, recognize their need for conversion and provide them with resources to help them become citizens of a more just society.

The challenge of our day is one of surrender. Surrendering our prejudices, our need to do it our way, our fears of letting another's gifts and talents bring forth a meaningful effect. How beautiful we are in the eyes of God. Our task, then, is to revere one

another following in the footsteps of Jesus. We are indeed walking on holy ground.

Endnote

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Inculturation and Pastoral Ministers

Dr. Frank Lucido

As a DRE, Catholic school principal, liturgical minister, catechist, or in any other parish ministry, there are certain skills and attitudes that are needed in order to make the Gospel come alive for the People of God. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (*GDC* 97) states, "the Gospel message seeks inculturation because the Good News is destined for all peoples." The document further states "'Inculturation' of the faith, whereby in a wonderful exchange are comprised, "all the riches of the nations which have been given to Christ as an inheritance," it is a profound and global process and a slow journey." (*GDC* 109). The paragraph further explains:

> It is not simply an external adaptation designed to make the Christian message more attractive or superficially decorative. On the contrary, it means the penetration of the deepest strata of persons and peoples by the Gospel which touches them deeply, "going to the very center and roots" of their cultures... The Christian community must discern, on the one hand, which riches to "take" up as compatible with the faith; on the other, it must seek to "purify," and "transform" those criteria, modes of thought and lifestyles which are contrary to the Kingdom of God. Such discernment is governed by two basic principles: "compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church." All of the people of God must

> be involved in this process which..."needs to take place gradually, in such a way that it really is an expression of the community's Christian experience."

In order for inculturation to take place in the Christian community, the ministers who are serving in the community must have or develop certain attitudes, skills, and a basic knowledge of the cultures which comprise the local Church. If we are to evangelize, to welcome, and bring the Gospel message to the people, the ministers, whether they are the Catholic school principal, teachers, the DRE, the catechists in the parish program or in RCIA, or the Youth Ministry personnel, need to develop certain behaviors that help the different cultures come to embrace and feel welcomed into the parish community.

Inculturation of the Gospel is much more than presenting a multicultural perspective in religious education, liturgy, or any parish programs. We can draw from research in the social sciences to identify specific attitudes, skills, and knowledge that a pastoral minister must acquire in order to facilitate the inculturation of the Gospel message. First of all, the ministers must have clarified their own cultural identity and have a good self-concept. As the old adage states, "You cannot give what you do not have." A person involved in parish ministry must feel a respect for their own cultural identity and have moved beyond any type of prejudice or ill-informed perceptions of any cultural group. The word *catholic* means universal, open to all. A pastoral minister must exemplify being Catholic, open to all!

Sister Joyce Khoury in a presentation at the NCEA Convention in Boston identified attitudes, skills, and information that are needed to begin to develop a multicultural perspective in working with diverse cultures. These attitudes include: having an open heart, an open mind, a willingness to learn, and trying to understand the culture from others' cultural perspectives and experiences. Having a sensitivity to and understanding of others, acceptance of cultural differences, and having a positive attitude is also essential, if the awareness of the diversity of cultural viewpoints is to be respected.

Ministers must also have certain skills to be able to develop the ability to inculturate the Gospel. Conflict resolution, decision-making, and being a critical thinker are some of the skills needed. Being able to analyze and synthesize multicultural data is also needed. Good interpersonal communication skills and the ability to understand different points of view contribute to developing a perspective of inclusivity rather than exclusivity. With a multicultural perspective, a parish minister is able to welcome the different cultures and begin the journey into the culture in order to inculturate the Gospel.

The parish ministers need to have the ability to seek out accurate, complete information about other cultures as part of the data or knowledge that a pastoral minister must develop to serve in an evangelizing parish. Stereotypes must be dispelled, and an attempt to study the historical, psychological, and sociological factors, as well as the folklore of the culture, will help acquaint the parish minister with facts rather than mere perceptions about the culture. Once the data is acquired through research or dialogue with members of the cultural group, the parish minister will find reasons and explanations for behaviors, values, or traditions that might not be understood or differ greatly from the norms, values, or traditions of the parish community.[1]

As we approach another culture to minister to its people, we must be aware that along with their personal faith journey, the people of that culture are in process of acculturation into the mainstream culture of the United States. Faith is never devoid of culture. In many cases, culture serves as the context for faith development. We must understand that the U. S. culture has certain values that may appear to be very positive and that the immigrant culture will try to assimilate. However, we need to create the awareness that not all values of the dominant culture should be viewed as positive. As we observe and interact with the new cultures, we must try to understand these cultures at a deeper level rather than just superficially.

Dr. Frank Gonzalez states that, "elements of surface culture include the tangible things related to a group of people." When we

speak of a group of people as a whole, the possibility exists of stereotyping everyone within the group. This often leads to over-generalizations about a particular ethnic group and ultimately provides erroneous information rather than clarifying the matter. Surface culture includes foods, holidays, arts, folklore, history and the noted personalities of the group. These are the aspects of a culture with which we are often most familiar. However, these characteristics of a culture do not always tell us about the real "spirit" of the people and sometimes lead to stereotypical thinking about certain cultural groups.[2]

As pastoral lay ministers, we need to study and come to understand the "deep features" of culture. As identified by Nelson Brooks, these include the ceremonies of the group, attitudes toward courtship and marriage, gestures, kinesics, concepts of time, space and proxemics, health and medicine, family ties, folk myths, religious practices, attitudes toward self and land ownership, acceptable manners toward older persons, peers, and younger persons, and attitudes and beliefs about doing things against culturally accepted patterns. Gaining understanding of some of these deep elements of a culture can help us to come to understand and gain valuable insights into the culture.[3] If we are able to understand issues from different cultural perspectives then we will know what "teachable moments" there are to inculturate the Gospel. We will also come to understand the "lived faith" of a new group of people, and thereby be enriched ourselves in our faith lives as we get glimpses of how God lives in cultures that are perhaps very different from our own. These insights about other cultures and our personal reflections on them are "gifts" to us.

To develop these positive attitudes and to learn about other cultures is a process. David S. Hoopes has identified several steps that are involved in this journey. As we begin the journey of understanding other cultures, the first step is the awareness that we are living in a multicultural world. We can no longer be ethnocentric and believe that our culture is the only one that is present. The individual at this stage becomes aware of differences that are cul-

turally based and that they are a part of a people's given ways of thinking and acting. The person comes to understand and develop a non-judgmental attitude. From this level, a person will move to the acceptance/respect stage. The next stage is the valuing/appreciating stage where one begins to understand that cultures have strengths and differences with such understanding leading to an appreciation and valuing of specific aspects of other cultures. At the selective adoption stage, the individual tries and adopts new attitudes and behaviors that are useful and desirable to emulate from the new culture. This is the stage of the multicultural process where the Church would benefit by recognizing in a diversity of cultures the "gifts" which the cultures can bring into the community.[4] The blending of the gifts of the community would provide for a strong sense of trust in furthering the process of inculturation. As Church we do possess, "one faith, one Lord, and one Baptism."

At the last stage of the intercultural learning process, the people of the community come to feel comfortable and communicate effectively with people from many cultures and in many situations.[5] Ministers must be aware of this process and be willing to journey with our "brothers and sisters" so that all the gifts given to each community come to be recognized, understood, valued, and appreciated.

In his book, *Earthing the Gospel*, Gerald A. Arbuckle, S.M., describes three essential parts of any culture: symbols, myths, and rituals. These three areas offer us as pastoral ministers areas which we can observe so that we can better understand the different cultural groups to whom we minister. Father Arbuckle explains that a symbol immediately recalls one's identity. In symbols the object becomes the thing it signifies. Symbols speak primarily to the hearts or the imaginations of people and give rise to positive or negative feelings. Symbols speak for themselves.

Symbols, along with myths, form the very heart of the culture. As we come to understand the significant symbols of the many cultures in our parishes, we can link those cultures' symbols with our American cultural symbols, and explain how Christian symbols

can be symbols which come to be understood and accepted by many cultures. Symbols can be vehicles by which unity and diversity can be embraced.

"Myths," Father Arbuckle states, "explain to people the origins of natural and social realities. Myths explain fundamental truths about the world and human life and this truth is regarded as authoritative by those who accept it. Myths spark memories of the culture's heroes and heroines."[6]

If we become familiar with the myths of the culture, we can link the culture's mythology to our Christian story, and connect to the stories in the different cultures, explaining similarities and differences so that the people have experiences to which they can relate. As we retell the completeness of our Christian story, we can relate how their stories may or may not relate similar values. Inculturation also means that in certain situations, we must challenge cultural values which are not just and must be corrected or "purified" in order to truly be in accord with the message of the Gospel.

Ritual, explains Father Arbuckle, is the repeated, symbolic behaviors of people belonging to a particular culture; myth explains the meaning of this or that particular ritual. Our Christian rituals offer opportunities to teach our story as we learn from the rituals of the other people's cultures. These three areas provide "teachable moments" for pastoral ministers to come to understand cultures and to see how the Christian culture can be infused into what is considered sacred by a particular culture.[7]

As we understand all the social science processes involved in understanding cultures, we as pastoral ministers can begin to map strategies by which we can come to truly understand the diversity in our parishes. We discover from other cultural perspectives some of the deep culture elements of the people, we can understand where the people are coming from when they explain certain pastoral concerns to us in our ministerial situations. If we stop stereotyping a culture based on the surface cultural elements, we can look closely at the symbols, myths, and rituals of the culture so that we can bring

the Good News to the people with whom we have been gifted. We can proclaim the Good News in their vocabulary and language, appreciate their symbols, myths, and rituals, and make our parish communities become truly Catholic, open to all, for the Gospel is greater than any one culture. There is one faith, one Lord, one Baptism, one God of all.

Father Peter Schineller, S.J., in his book, *A Handbook on Inculturation,* states, in addition to knowing the situation and the Christian message, the agent of inculturation should also be aware of his own strengths and weaknesses, biases, and prejudices. The pastoral agent should also be aware of his or her vision of Church, gospel, theology, and tradition so that he or she can share this with others, letting it be modified and developed in that interchange. Some persons have specific skills for listening, others for leadership, and the more aware we are of our own abilities and lacks, the better we can carry out the process of inculturation.

The gifts of the Spirit reside within the community, we must recognize the gifts that diverse cultures bring to our parishes and dioceses, and find ways that those gifts can be brought forth for the good of the community and thus form a church of unity with diversity.

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2 Frank Gonzales. "Mexican American Culture in the Bilingual Education Classroom. Unpublished dissertation. University of Texas, Austin, 1978.

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5 *Ibid.*

6 Fr. Gerald Arbuckle. *Earthing the Gospel.* p. 35.

7 Ibid. p. 42.

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CHAPTER 4

Culture as Vehicle of the Gospel: An Asian Perspective

Dr. Cris V. Villapando

On May 20, 1982, in instituting the Pontifical Council on Culture, Pope John Paul II made a profound remark that began to alter the mental maps of pastoral leaders. He said that "a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived." Such exhortation banished old assumptions, emphasized the gravity of the responsibility of inculturating the faith and established a standard by which to judge the authenticity of an evangelizing catechesis. With this as a guiding principle, it becomes imperative that principals and DREs continue to build the Kingdom by selecting gospel-friendly elements from various cultures. Such elements have been called *semina verbi* in our ancient tradition, meaning "seeds of the word" to describe God's hidden works outside formal Revelation.

The process, then, of sifting through a given culture and lifting the *semina verbi* is not a peculiarly contemporary approach to evangelization. This had been the Apostle Paul's approach which dates back to circa 50 C.E. when in the Areopagus, he dialogued with the Athenian culture, philosophically sketching Yahweh's outreach to all nations, even those outside the Chosen People (Acts 17: 16-34).

Today, the same mandate to inculturate is incumbent on us. Just like Paul, we must pose the question: "Using culture as a vehicle

of faith, what practical steps can the principal / DRE take to enable his or her community to achieve intimacy with God?" In responding to this challenge, this paper has been asked to take an Asian perspective.[1] The following suggestions, however, could be extended to apply to other cultures.

Three Foundational Starting Points

1. Seek a Basic Awareness of Asian Culture and its History

A general knowledge of the culture is a *conditio sine qua non* if one were to gain respect or even fall in love with any culture. This knowledge must go beyond stereotypical familiarity with this people's food, costumes, music, and dance. In teaching the unit "Immigration to America," for instance, (which the catechist could use in catechizing about "journeys of faith," "the People of God as Pilgrim People,"etc.), a purely Western European approach would be totally inadequate because there have been multiple patterns of immigration to this country. There were those of African origins who were forcefully uprooted and brought unwillingly as slave commodities; others of the Indian nations were forced to march the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma; and still others escaped the Iron Curtain to raise families in freedom. What about Asian migrations? Filipinos came in various waves. Prior to the 1940's the Philippines had ease of passage because it was an American colony. In the 1950's, many came to serve in the US Navy by virtue of special legislation. After the 1960's, Filipino doctors and nurses were recruited to compensate for the lack of US medical personnel. The early 1970's forced thousands to flee Marcos' martial law in the Philippines. In contrast, the Vietnamese experienced a wrenching experience of unplanned transplantation. With the collapse of the Saigon government in 1975, the world witnessed Vietnamese scaling buildings to cling to overloaded helicopters. Subsequently, others in the dead of night embarked on flimsy boats risking ocean pirates and deadly storms to flee to freedom. From these two cultural examples alone, it becomes

self-evident that knowledge of a people's history is critically important because history defines a people and locates where their aches and pains are. Only after identifying this place of "grief and pain"[2] may the educator then proceed to a more religious level and identify the faith issues connected with these cultural experiences. Where was God or how was God present in these harrowing experiences? How were those experiences transformative? The relevance of these questions impinges not only upon the particular culture that underwent these trials but also the dominant culture in need of reconciliation and closure because of historical ties.

2. Obtain a Basic Knowledge of Asian Values

One way to achieve this might be to contrast Asian Values with those cultural forces being encountered in the current social milieu. One must keep in mind, however, that *the purpose of such contrasting is not to denigrate one culture and elevate the other* but simply to catch a glimpse of differences. Thus, if one were to examine Asian values against the background of five dominant cultural forces present in American society, the sociological grid might look like the following:

FIGURE 1: CULTURAL FORCES IN CONTRAST

CULTURAL FORCES IN TODAY'S AMERICAN SOCIETY	ASIAN VALUES
Success: The relentless pursuit of perfection; the drive to achieve; we are "#1"; failure is not an option; etc.	**Harmony**: Success is communitarian in nature and conceived more in terms of harmony with my family, my community, my work place. Filipinos have a saying: *"Ang hindi lumilingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makararating sa paroroonan."*[3]
Efficiency: Does it work and does it work fast? One-button speed dial. Pay at the pump. Drive-thru pharmacy. 800 numbers, ATM's etc. Timely boardroom decisions.	**Personalismo**: Being pleasant and nice is a virtue treasured above efficiency. Being businesslike alienates. Time is not limited and quantified. Business deals are done in places of elegant dining, not just boardrooms.

(Figure 1 continued on page 34)

(Figure 1 continued)

Individualism: Self-made man. Pull oneself up by own bootstrap. The Oscar Award. The MVP Award. The Hall of Fame. Self-actualization. Family is nuclear. Focus on a hero, etc.	**Family**: The welfare of the family supersedes self-achievements. The opinion and feelings of the extended family (of the clan and the community) also count as a matter of course. *Pakikipagkapwa-tao*[4] (act of solidarity.) Not just the hero, but People Power.[5]
Consumerism: "He who dies with the most toys wins." "The Price is Right." "Buy one, get one free." "All you can eat." "Who wants to marry a millionaire?" 7-Eleven Big Gulp and giant beer steins. Luxury cars, etc.	**Frugality**: Leftover food is "re-cycled" into another dish because it is God's precious gift. Asian tea cups: never the size of Big Gulp or beer steins. Functional cars for economy and durability.
Freedom: A distant event - 1776. Absolute and unbridled. The US Constitution. Freedom of Speech, of Assembly, of Religion. Roe vs. Wade. Immunity from self-incrimination, ACLU, Miranda rights, etc.	**Freedom:** More concrete and recent reality as in fleeing communism & dictatorships. Not so much freedom from legal interference as freedom from economic oppression. Boat people. Smuggling Chinese in transport containers.

It would be prudent at this point to emphasize three caveats:

- All cultures are in need of redemption.[6] Both Asian and American cultures have strengths and weaknesses attached to their particular values;
- Generally speaking, no values can be exclusively predicated of a given culture. It would be erroneous to believe that a particular value is absolutely absent from a given culture.
- It takes all cultures of the universe, discovered and undiscovered to "adequately"[7] reflect the profound mystery of God.

3. Promote Cultural Encounters Involving Asian Participants

This third suggestion can be crafted in several ways. In designing a liturgical service, for example, the environment, language, and music could be culturally diversified. Majestic, trium-

phant hymns of royal origins may not be the music to which the Asian may warmly relate. In organizing a social gathering, the focus at early stages should primarily be on establishing bonds, and if possible, friendships. This event should revolve around food, spiced with music and rich conversation. These initial encounters should not be curriculum-driven but should gently stimulate evocative disclosures. For later encounters, a more structured conversation around given issues could be established. Prudence, however, must be observed in discussing a subject matter rigorously because the Asian American might shy away in modesty (harmony and modesty being a dominant value as mentioned above for this group.) The dominant culture[8] tends to process ideas more forcefully to arrive upon quick, definitive conclusions. The Asian American, on the other hand, tends to be more modest and exploratory, always observing harmony as a central consideration in the relationship.

As challenging as the above three suggestions might be, it behooves us to remind ourselves of several exciting things happening in this country:

1. There is strong evidence of communities moving from tolerance as a racial paradigm to friendship. Unlike Bosnia, Rwanda, and East Timor where religious and ethnic strife led to massive genocide, the United States still stands as the greatest experiment in diversity on the planet. Tolerance, a virtue based on a basic concept of non-interference, is now being replaced by friendships between cultures. Textbooks, films, and pastoral agents have become more proactive on this issue during the last fifty years than in the past.

2. There is strong evidence that the U.S. remains culturally malleable. Unlike Canada where the French-English cultural walls have hardened and ethnic groups have become bitterly polarized, Americans still exhibit a healthy openness to provide "space" for other cultures. The Los Angeles Archdiocese, for instance, creates sacred space for various cultures by celebrating Eucharist in 50 languages every Sunday. Nationally, approximately thirty-five (35) million Americans still speak a language other than English at home

— a total of about 320 different languages. In Harvard University's Widener library alone, there are 120,000 titles published in scores of languages other than English.[9] These resources are genuine American literature not written in English still to be discovered and mainstreamed into regular curricula.

3. There is strong evidence that the American Church hierarchy is determined to pursue inculturation as a permanent mode of ministry because the approach is anchored in Scriptural theology itself. This re-defines inculturation as a permanent mission vs. a tentative pastoral adaptation until more uniformity and more mainstreaming is achieved. Fads come and go but inculturation will remain a permanent refracting lens for many years to come.

ENDNOTES

1 This presents a real problem. Unlike Western Europeans who generally could claim the common legacy of Graeco-Roman Civilization, there is little or no common heritage amongst Asians. Asia is predominantly a geographic designation more than a cultural description. Consider, for example, the following Asians: the Israeli, the Chinese, the Filipino, Indian (Bombay), the Laotian, the Micronesians, the Hmong, to name a few.

2 *Gaudium et Spes*, #1.

3 Literally: "The person who does not glance back to his origin will never arrive at his destination." This saying is understood within a context of harmony cemented by gratitude.

4 Filipino term for the act of solidarity and harmony with one's fellow human being. Literally: "The act of trying to be a human being with another human being."

5 Unlike most Western revolutions, the Philippine Revolution of 1986 focused and honored not a single hero but the people in its new political paradigm of People Power.

6 *Lumen Gentium*, 13. Also, *Fides et Ratio*, 71; *Catechesi Tradendae*, 53; *General Directory for Catechesis* 203,204. And more recently, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Pontifical Council for Culture, Vatican City, 1999. 2, 4, 5.

7 Not in the Thomistic sense of "exhaustive" because all language used to talk about God is essentially metaphorical and incomplete.

[8] The phrase "dominant culture" has been deliberately used instead of American values because many Blacks, Asians, American Indians, and Latinos who have lived in this country for many generations have actually undergone complete *assimilation*, in the strict sociological sense of the word, i.e. self-appropriation of values generated by the Euro-based majority.

[9] *The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 30, 1998. Section 2 B4.*

CHAPTER 5

The Journey Home: Inculturation in Native America

Rev. V. Paul Ojibway, S.A.

Introduction

"I didn't know there were any..." This is the most common response encountered when pastors, administrators, and principals are asked if American Indian[1] Catholics are part of the parish faith community, school, or diocesan programs. The Church cannot serve persons that they do not see. How is it that American Indian Catholics are so invisible in the Church and society? And perhaps the more significant question: Is there any possibility of spiritual and cultural inclusion of the American Indian in the structures and institutions, sacred and secular, of this nation? The gulf between the ancient cultures of this continent and modern American society is for most American Indians impossible to cross without leaving behind one's most precious gifts, that is, the profound sense of personal and communal identity, relationships, and a connection to the land that is grounded in a longer history than that of western civilization itself and now experiences an exile longer than Israel's sojourn in Egypt.

Much of what I am describing in ministry with American Indian Catholics that follows is aimed not at reservation communities but for those who minister in urban, suburban, and rural institutions where American Indians are not the predominant cultural group and experience a culturally diverse pastoral life at best.

Native America

Native America is made up of more than 550 tribes, with a total of approximately 2.5 million enrolled members on 314 reservation homelands, and with over 200 distinct languages that are still spoken in the continental United States and in Alaska. The median age of all tribal members is approximately 20 years. Only slightly over 20% of all tribal members now live on reservations year round. The vast majority live in rural or urban communities, most not by choice but because of economic necessity. It is estimated that the United States census through 1990 has restricted the count of approximately 8 million persons who would identify themselves in part as American Indian and Alaskan Native if allowed.[2] On the reservations and in rural and urban centers, over 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty level, consisting overwhelmingly of women and children. American Indians and Alaskan Natives live at the negative extremes of all measures for economic, social, and educational development in any industrialized nation on a per capita basis, and in comparison with all other ethnic/racial populations in the United States have the highest rates of infant mortality, youth suicide, chronic disease, and lack of adequate nutrition. American Indians are imprisoned longer for less serious crimes than any other ethnic/racial group, and have the highest rates of unemployment, racially motivated violence against them, student dropout, and addiction to alcohol and drugs, with the lowest number and levels of funding for rehabilitation for all critical needs.[3] It is estimated that over 40 percent of all American Indians and Alaskan Natives are Roman Catholic, predominately centered in the Southwest and the Great Lakes regions. Adjusted on a per capita basis, it is likewise estimated that there are nearly as many Roman Catholic American Indians as African-Americans.

The Invisible Ones

American Indians are an invisible people in a society that generally only recognizes Native America in its own popular myths,

distorted history, or as forced residents of far-off reservations. They are generally reluctant to stand out or be recognized as Native Americans in civic and religious institutions. Generally, they experience the assumption that all "brown" people are "Hispanic" from some other national origin. However, American Indians come in many shades of color and body type, and the vast majority are now mixtures of bloodlines from other tribes or ethnic/racial groups. And certainly new challenges are on the horizon for the Church from the tens of thousands of indigenous from Northern and Southern Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean who entering the United States from across all the southern borders. Many of these new communities speak neither Spanish nor English, and yet are considered "Hispanic." Further, data suggests that as many as 6-8 million Americans can be identified as American Indians, even though they may not be able to document it or are not enrolled members of tribes. For a vast majority of these tribal persons, their lack of documentation rests on the decision of the federal government historically to either terminate their land-base or their tribal structure, and thus really make these sisters and brothers "invisible."[4]

Invisibility is further sustained over generations by the denial of difference and need in parishes and schools, at all levels. In short, most American Indians must leave their culture outside the Church and school doors if they are to feel at all welcome. This is a fracturing process for individuals and families across generations, and furthers the disintegration of meaning, values, and spiritual connection. American Indians, in general, can only be themselves in the midst of a living, breathing memory, alive in a land they know as sacred.

We Are All Related

The experience of the sacred, whether for the individual or in the communal context, first and always is an ongoing relational reality, based in respect, honor, and dignity for each person and that of the family, indigenous or not. The reluctance of many American

Indian Catholics to self-identify comes from parish and institutional structures that mediate against a sense of relationship and trust between honorable persons.[5] The personal process of knowing, building trust, and fostering a sense of belonging is paramount in helping American Indians move in the direction in which they desire to go. This is no easy task, for the qualities that American Indians respect most in spiritual leadership - holiness, honor, respect, caring, listening, waiting, humor, and storytelling, among others - take time, space, energy, and an open heart.

American Indians are a gift to the Church, plain and simple. Far too many times, American Indians do not see their gifts welcomed, appreciated, or understood. The language of evangelization, catechetics, leadership development, and ministry formation must begin with the recognition of the American Indian community. It must take into account how they are conceived and respected as persons and members of tribal nations. This is a critical factor in how the Catholic Church can respond, not in easy words but in deeds over time. The dominant culture must change its mind and memory so that this community has the time, space, support, and encouragement to heal and thus teach who it is to a nation and Church that has never known its heart and spirit.

At heart, the American Indian and the American Catholic experience shares a common ground as yet unrecognized or engaged. Both are charged with being Good News to and for one another, supporting, encouraging, and delighting in the search for authenticity in the renewal of our cultures, tribal and Western European (and now even global). Sharing the path with American Indian Catholics must be an intentional process on the part of American culture towards a shared knowledge of how to live, love God, and one another. In short, are American Catholics willing to take seriously the original peoples of this land? It will require no less than embracing the most difficult of virtues in changing American cultural self-understanding: humility, gentleness, patience, and meekness.

Most American Indians live in the shadows of the American dream. They have been exiled to the margins and exulted in popular

myth. Neither path leads home. As is noted by the American Indian scholar, Vine Deloria, Jr.:

> There is no question that American Indians have been mired in a century-long exile...We find little ebb and flow of sentiment and understanding which keeps a community healthy and growing, only apparent movement back and forth between poles of political independence and dependence. In Indian cultural and religious life, we have seen a unilateral shedding of old forms coupled with a paralyzing inability to create new customs and traditions which have a relationship with the past.[6]

The ministry of the Church can nurse, in the best and most fundamental sense of the word, heal and assist in creating the conditions for reconciliation both from within and without. Standing with the Indian in his or her search for historic and social justice, religious freedom, self-determination, and basic human rights is an initial, critical witness to the American Indian Catholic. A witness that announces clearly then that we are not alone, the Gospel is the only means of unity and reconciliation, and the Lord is indeed the light to all nations.

The appropriate inclusion in the life of the parish, school, and institutions of Catholic life is a shared process, fundamentally a dialogic experience that can change the hearts and minds of the participants. American Indian Catholics are in no hurry when it comes to sacred matters. Taking time has a sacred character to it: it announces in silence the time needed for discernment, deliberation, preparation, and gathering strength. Learning to wait (to listen, feel, and respect what comes of waiting) is not a well-worked virtue in American life but is substantial to the American Indian soul. Waiting implies freedom: an individual's freedom to choose a direction, respond to the sacred, and understand the unfolding mystery of his or her life. It is an essential value in many tribal traditions that one cannot interfere with or intervene in the growth of an

individual without risking great harm out of ignorance of what God's will is or what is stirring in the soul. Thus the rituals of life, such as prayer, washing, giving thanks, gift giving, and honoring creation and ones' relatives, share with the sacramental life of the Church the great and small moments of God's healing grace, and must be considered for inclusion. The best means for evangelization and renewal are in the sacraments experienced as the personal encounter with the living Great Mystery, the God of all creation. Actively and intentionally welcoming the traditional ceremonies of preparation in an appropriate way can bridge cultures in ways that words, rubrics, and programs cannot. How this is done is where the dialogue, testing of understandings, and mutual appreciation bring the minister, religious educator, or administrator together with the American Indian community in unexpected and exciting ways.

The Blindness of Racism

The most difficult and challenging shadow in American society is racism in all its ugly forms. Racism is the most blatant and visible in and around reservation communities and is just now being addressed. The continued exclusion of ritual forms and religious language is often based on what appears to be a distortion not only of our best theology, but of unfamiliarity with the recent Vatican documents on culture and catechesis and an ignorance of the profound outreach of Pope John Paul II in his evangelization of indigenous peoples in all parts of the globe. Cultural ignorance and isolation are no longer possible or tolerable in effective ministry.

Now What?

I have been intentional in presenting above just some of the complex issues that need to be addressed if inculturation is to be more than accommodation and a newer method of assimilation. I suggest the following seven areas as critical stepping-stones in the process of inculturation.

1. Awareness of the "Other." To recognize, articulate, and where necessary, confront the presumptions and stereotypes that disempower, distort, and marginalize American Indians is no small process but a critical and necessary one. We must change our minds and hearts on one critical truth and embrace its consequences before we can shape a process of genuine inculturation together with the American Indian. Nothing in the history of the Indigenous of this hemisphere, from the first sight of Columbus coming round the bend to the present, is or was inevitable; we have the power to change the present and take responsibility for the future. It is vital to engage in a individual and group conversation on the spirituality of ministry as a distinctly cultural self-expression. To intentionally engage in this dialogue as a staff can provide the means for creating a common ground for catechists and American Indian leaders. Is this not inherent in the power of our ministry in the name of the Lord?

2. Honor of Place and the Place of Tradition. In the dust beneath your feet rest the remains of ten thousand generations of human beings who called this land home in a unique and powerful way. Even if extinct, the tribal peoples of this land cannot be forgotten or merely made token mention of in the current liturgical and educational fashions if we are to respect and understand a different self-conscious spirituality and cultural tradition as gifts to the Church. One cannot know all there is to know about Native America (it is far too complex and diverse), but one can begin to engage a tribal or regional set of traditions and thus raise awareness and the capacity for understanding and inclusion. Remember the People of this land not in passing, but as an integral part of the community's prayer and celebrations at each turn of the seasons for the journey they are making and the sacrifice of their land which we now so richly enjoy. The parish and school staff might seek consultation on the historic tribal presence in their area and seek out resource persons who know the contemporary reality of the multi-tribal community. This is a positive way in which to educate for a different understanding and appreciation of what is possible in the inclusion of American Indians in the life of the faith community.

3. Witness in the Marketplace. Solidarity in the pursuit of social justice is a fundamental condition for inculturation of peoples who have only known exile, poverty, and alienation from the American and immigrant dreams. Sharing concern and solidarity with the urgent issues in Native America is critical for evangelization and inculturation. National and state public policy on issues of health, education, self-determination regarding use and governance of land, natural resources, access to and protection of sacred sites, religious freedom, and eco-justice, among others, are issues that have a moral and religious meaning for all indigenous peoples. In the last decade, we have finally discovered that American Indians' issues are part of a global struggle that has an impact on our way of life and wealth, and must be coherently addressed by the religious community at all levels if we are to announce the Gospel with credibility. A positive step can be in gathering together the catechetical and social justice leadership in the parish or school to develop a strategy whereby one urgent issue for American Indians can be included in the education of the parish and its staff.

4. Public Prayer and Religious Memory. It is critical that we intentionally demythologize and thus re-educate the secular and religious remembrance of our common history if we are to engage the necessary conditions for inculturation and evangelization, that is, begin the conversion and evangelization of the dominant culture(s) in America. The pilgrims of Plymouth were just one small group that welcomed and shared a meal in thanksgiving, and Cristobal Columbo in his tiny ships was just one of the untold thousands who sought fortune at the expense of the original people of this land. From Cadillac Mountain in Maine to the first mission in California, from the shores of Puget Sound to the far islands of the Caribbean, Indian communities welcomed the stranger, clothed the unprepared, fed the hungry, made war and made peace. Do our Church and our institutions remember and honor the history of their place and their time? In short, we must reconnect the history of American Indians in our prayer and deeply-felt thanksgiving for what we only share for a brief moment in time. Every day is a thanksgiving day. Review

texts and resources that support the appropriate inclusion of the American Indian experience not just at Thanksgiving time but in times of parish renewal, leadership training, long range planning and other occasions where the parish can widen its view and understanding of place, time, and history.

5. Claiming the Presence. Systems and organizational style must change that disregard the reality of the ethnic/racial communities that share in our parish, school, and institutional life at all levels of the diocesan life and national life. It must be remembered that the American Indian Catholic are perhaps the most mobile, young, multicultural, and multi-racial population in the Americas. We have a stake in the future of the Church, on the reservation and wherever we find ourselves. When even one Indian Catholic is welcomed where none were before, invited to share his or her gifts, and empowered in ministry and in community leadership, it has positive and lasting consequences for his or her family and the Indian community. It is vital to review the parish and school methods for accurate and useful date gathering that is culturally sensitive and enables the staff to plan for effective outreach with and for the American Indian community.

6. Celebrating Differences. Religious leaders and communities engaged in cultural self-awareness, and thus conscious of both their gifts and limitations, can begin to understand the changes necessary in welcoming and engaging different cultures. Cross-cultural dialogue, invitations to lead in the community, shared meals, and action for justice are just some of the beginning points in a much larger process of reorienting our sense of time, place, and relationships that a multicultural Church will demand of itself in the future.

7. Christian Formation and Religious Leadership. Evangelization and the ongoing experience of genuine inculturation must be rooted in leadership formation and intentional experiences that reconnect the past with the present, and reconcile and heal the memories not only for Indians but necessarily for the wider community. Ministerial leadership must at some level have a passion for and a dedication to engaging the American Indian Catholic

experience as a genuinely "American" experience, and also share in the wealth of spirituality, ritual sensitivity, and the innate love of beauty and harmony that are hallmarks of a life lived as we know we were made to live by the Creator: in dignity, honor, holiness, prayer, and deep respect. This is perhaps best accomplished by rethinking the curriculum of leadership formation and the ongoing education of catechists and directors of religious education, among others.

Conclusion

This overview is too short and too incomplete. I have not addressed the potential of imagination and the revisioning of structures, the deep longing for beauty that makes for an extraordinary spiritual life, the role of music and dance, silence and ritual, the sense of identity born of sacrifice for one's belief and one's people, the capacity for story to heal, unite, and remake the soul of the person and community, the wonder of gathering the food that is blessed, and the hospitality for the stranger and the Spirit that indeed makes us human beings. In short, the appropriate inculturation of the American Indian Catholic must include all these and more. We still do not have a clear idea of why diocesan priestly formation and religious orders do not attract or even retain the Indian vocations they receive, or how to empower those who stay in ministry to the American Catholic Church. Why can't our native vocations, be they lay, religious, or clerical, remain healthy in their cultural, spiritual, and communal relationships and still be part of the institutional structures of the Church? We have much reflection and work still to do together.

We have glimpses of what is possible and we have walls we must break through to change what now seems to us in the American Indian Catholic community to be impossible. The Indian Catholic community is a gift to the American Church and even to the wider North American cultural life, and holds perhaps many of the lessons necessary for all of us to journey out of a darkened and distorted past

and witness now to the wonders of the Great Mystery in our midst on this day and in this hour. We are challenged to imagine life grounded and lived differently in this America so that we can see our sacramental, spiritual, and communal life in ways never thought possible. Our prayer is simply this: Creator, Let it be so, Let it be so.

ENDNOTES

1 The use of "American Indian" is a clearer designation of indigenous tribal peoples in distinction from "Native Americans" that can denote the further inclusion of Canadian "First Nations" and indigenous from Mexico and Central America. The most accurate description is to identify indigenous by their tribal or national identity; however American Indians themselves will describe themselves as "Indian" or refer to the whole of the indigenous experience as "Native America" or "of the People."

2 Congressional Testimony on Data, Native American Advisory Board. Census 2000, Bureau of Census. 1995 Statistical Briefs, U.S. Department of Commerce. House Committee on Commerce, October 1998.

3 Documentation by Senate Committee on American Indian Affairs, Congressional Briefing to 105th Congress, Aura Kanegis, Native American Affairs, Friends Committee on National Legislation and the Working Group, Washington Interreligious Staff Council, November 1998.

4 *The Rights of Indians and Tribes: The Basic ACLU Guide to Indian and Tribal Rights*, 2nd edition, Stephen L. Pevar, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville. 1992. see section D. 1887-1934: Allotment and Assimilation, p.5, and Section F. 1953-1968: Termination, p. 7.

5 *Self-Identify* in this context refers to establishing a separate and distinct racial/cultural identity to be understood and appreciated. Historically, American Indians and Alaskan Natives are the only racial/ethnic groups in the nation that must self-identify with documentation to gain access to mandated services at either the federal or state levels. A century of dealing with forced assimilation, based in the General Allotment Act of 1887 (or Dawes Act), forced the Catholic and Protestant Church missionaries to assume supervision of American Indians. The consequence of this federal legislation now rests in the lived memory of many who remember the necessity of seeking access to food, shelter, and clothing from missionaries.

6 "Out of Chaos," Vine Deloria, Jr., in *Parabola*, Vol. X, Number 2, May 1985, page 20.

CHAPTER 6

INCULTURATION: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Beatrice Cunningham

When we begin to look at inculturation from an African American/Black perspective, we must begin with scripture for we are a biblical people. In Mark's Gospel, chapter 12: verses 29-31, we read, "Jesus replied, 'The first is this: Hear O Israel! The Lord your God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'" Also, Genesis chapter 1: verse 27, states, "God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them."[1]

Inculturation from an African American perspective must address the fact that Blackness is a gift from God and affirm that Blackness is a part of God's image. We must be able to help all people, especially black people, have a renewed sense of self. We cannot love our neighbor if we cannot love ourselves. Nathan Jones in his book, *Sharing the Old, Old Story* says it this way, "We must know who we are" and "whose we are."[2]

INCULTURATION OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

The Word of God became man, a concrete man, in space and

time and rooted in a specific culture: "Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom he lived." This is the original "inculturation" of the word of God and is the model of all evangelization by the church, "called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures" (*GDC* #109).

Inculturation of the faith is a profound global process and a slow journey. It is not simply an external adaptation designed to make the Christian message more attractive or superficially decorative. On the contrary, it means the penetration of the deepest strata of persons and peoples by the Gospel which touches them deeply, "going to the very center and roots" of their cultures (*GDC* #109).

In this work of inculturation, however, the Christian community must discern, on the one hand, which riches to "take up" as compatible with the faith; on the other, it must seek to "purify" and "transform those criteria, modes of thought and lifestyles which are contrary to the kingdom of God. Such discernment is governed by two basic principles: compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church. All of the people of God must be involved in this process which...needs to take place gradually, in such a way that it really is an expression of the community's Christian experience" (*GDC* #109).

African American/Black spirituality must enter the discussion when anyone looks at inculturation. The black bishops of the United States have written a document which explains African American spirituality in detail: *What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States*. African American spirituality is based on sacred scripture. For African Americans, the biblical story is their story and the bible is their promise of hope. Scripture is a part of their roots; the bible has permeated their tradition, and the Good News of the Gospel has been enmeshed in their past of pain and oppression.

Most African American adults grew up in homes where the family bible was displayed in a place of honor and was truly a 'book of the family.' Unlike too many households today where the bible

sits among the other dusty books on a shelf, these adults grew up in homes where the bible was read, reverenced, and frequently quoted. In many African American parishes, bible study will most likely be the only form of adult education that is successfully taking place. To be a biblical people means allowing the living word to nourish and inspire one's person, in season and out of season. It also means being at peace in the comforting assurance that one's perception of life and history begins and ends with God.

African American Spirituality has four major characteristics: it is contemplative, holistic, joyful, and communitarian.

1. Contemplative. For African Americans, prayer is frequently spontaneous and pervasive. Every place is a place for prayer because God's presence is heard and felt. African American spirituality senses God's transcendence and the vital intimacy of his closeness. God's power constantly breaks into the imperfect world of everyday life. The sense of God's presence and power taught African-American ancestors that no one can run or hide from God.

2. Holistic. Like the biblical tradition, there is no dualism in African American spirituality. Divisions between the intellect and emotion, spirit and body, actions and contemplation, individual and community, sacred and secular are foreign to African Americans. In keeping with African heritage, they are not ashamed of their emotions. Religious experience involves the whole person; both the feelings and the intellect, the heart as well as the head. Moreover, African Americans in general find foreign any notion that the body is evil. They find their own holistic approach to be in accord with the scriptures and the logic of the Incarnation.

3. Joyful. Joy is the hallmark of African American/Black spirituality. Joy is first of all celebration. Celebration is movement and song, rhythm and feeling, color and sensation, exultation and thanksgiving. African Americans celebrate the presence and the proclamation of the word. This joy is a sign of their faith and their hope. It is never an escape from reality, however harsh reality may be. Indeed this joy is often present even in the midst of deep anguish and bitter tears.

4. Communitarian. In the African culture, the "I" takes its meaning in the "We." In other words, individual identity is to be found within the context of community. The sense of community is a major component of their spirituality and permeates their experience of liturgy and worship. Worship is a celebration of community and must be shared. No one stands alone in prayer. In order for Christian faith to live, it must be nurtured within a community. The church has, like other institutions of business, education, family, and politics, "bought into" the basic assumptions of a racist and sick society. However, the Church stands forth as a community of sinners saved by grace, and this makes a difference. Within the Church, meaningful and supportive relationships exist and are fostered. Everyone is affirmed. The struggles, charisms, spiritual quests, and mutual concerns of all ages are shared.

For African Americans who embrace the Roman Catholic way and tradition of being Christian, liturgy becomes the focus of the community's life. Faith as lively worship is the highest moment in their congregational life. Liturgy presupposes and needs community, just as it reflects and expresses the community's story, memory, beliefs, values, and lifestyles. To be Church means that there is no such thing as a "private" faith. The entire community journeys to God together. This affirms that the cornerstone of Christian faith is to be for others. God does have a human face.

Community also means social concern and social justice. African American spirituality never excludes concern for human suffering and the welfare of others. As often as you did it for one of the least of my brothers, you did it for me are the words of Christ that cut through any supposed tension between secular concerns and the sacred.[3] It is a spiritual heritage that always embraces the total person.

The Family. African American Spirituality with its communal dimension has a strong sense of family. The heart of the human community is family. For African Americans, the family has always meant "the extended family." In practice the extended family goes beyond kinship and marital relationships, to include persons who

have no family of their own, having been accepted into the wider family circle. These families feel a deep responsibility for one another in both ordinary times of daily life and in the extraordinary moments of need or crisis.[4]

Inculturation from an African American/Black perspective must take into consideration these qualities and build on the values that are already present in the community. Inculturation must build, then, on life and on the day-to-day experiences of real people and must endeavor to uncover the good news in daily living. "Black pilgrimage" is about empowering people to get in touch with their own personal stories, both life's highs and lows, and to claim them. Without a doubt, inculturation helps develop a sense of worth, self-esteem and self-respect in adults, youth, and children. It helps them appreciate the fact that they journey together as a pilgrim people, to fully understand and realize the mystery of God and the mystery of the Gospel. Fellow pilgrims do not cling to the past, but optimistically hope and search for a new future.

If inculturation is to take place, it must concretely say something to the daily burdens, pleasures, cries, and struggles of hurting people. The Gospel message must offer answers to questions, give direction, and guide the community toward "a reason for the hope that is within." It is imperative that we offer Gospel alternatives to depression, street violence, marriage difficulties, the absence of vital male images, and other crippling problems of life.

African Americans are people of vision and believe that without a dream or hope to cling to, they will perish. They hold fast to the Gospel vision of dying and rising, despite evil in high places and our death-dealing world. They believe that God's loving promise of a kingdom of peace will be realized and that all peoples will sit at the table, filled, healed, and made whole.

The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, points out in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, that in order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can help transform.[5]

Inculturation from an African American perspective takes place as the gospel message takes root in the hearts of the people. To facilitate inculturation, here are some basic suggestions:

1. To enhance African American Spirituality, consider the example of Philip in Acts 8:26-39 and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Begin a conversation with African American Catholics. Get to know their culture by observing, listening, and learning from their reality. Listen for their ways of doing, thinking, believing, and feeling about things. What are the symbols that are important to this community? Let them ask their questions and assist them in finding the answers, so their needs may be met.

2. Raise the consciousness among all Catholics about their spiritual heritage, but especially on the part of African American Catholics. They, as a people, must know and understand their own story and traditions before they can share that story with others. This is why black history and black catholic history are so important. Also, assist the community in identifying those things in the culture that are contrary to Gospel values that can potentially harm the faith. Here, seek ways to change and transform modes of thought and lifestyles which are contrary to the Kingdom of God.

3. A community of faith and service is formed through prayer and thoughtful reflection on God's will. This leadership in prayer and service happens within the community. Call on the personal gifts and talents of the people to share God's love in such a way that it is really an expression of the community's Christian experience.

4. A sound catechetical program that covers the central truths of the faith is important. The African American community must organize formal catechesis where the central truths of the faith and of the Father's love are emphasized appropriately. This helps create a new Christian culture that injects Gospel values in the culture and rejects what is sinful. This catechesis educates the adults, youth, and children in the contributions of African American Catholics to the Church. Identify African martyrs and saints, so that

the community can identify with, be justifiably proud of, and have as role models these holy people.

An African American perspective of inculturation must advocate as an operational principle that everything in the lives of African Americans must be seized upon to reinforce, challenge, affirm, and nurture the lives of the people. Faith growth cannot be programmed; however, we can facilitate religious awareness and formation through a learning process attuned to the people's needs and their story of the faith. Designs for such a process are created in dialogue with the learning community, their daily life, and the Church's tradition.

We enhance African American spirituality and foster inculturation by developing African American leadership. Looking for ways that empower African American/Black Catholics to become leaders in every level in the church is important and necessary. Through baptism, we are all made part of God's royal family and are called to serve God and one another. True empowerment takes place as one is given opportunities to put learning into action. As James stated in scripture, "Faith without works is dead."[6]

In conclusion, African Americans have many gifts to share with the Church. The sense of family can be shared with the larger church. To truly look on each other as brothers and sisters in our parishes, and also to see our elders as living treasures, this sense of family needs to be recaptured by everyone. This is a gift in the African American communities that can be shared as a model for other communities.

The love that African Americans have for scripture is so needed in our church to give a sense of hope. The word of God gives direction and purpose in life. Black Catholics have been able to overcome much suffering because of their faith and their deep sense of God being present even in the midst of hard time and struggles. The gift of spontaneous and pervasive prayer that African Americans have is so needed in the world today.

One who is joyful is impelled to love and not to hate. A joyful person seeks to reconcile and will not cause division. A joyful

person seeks to console, strives to encourage, and to bring all to true peace. Such a gift is so needed in homes, churches, and throughout the country and the world. The sense of community and becoming a welcoming church is so important to all Catholic parishes. African American/Black Catholics are a part of the Roman Catholic Church with many gifts to offer to help build up the kingdom of God.

Inculturation will take place as the church sees more fully and utilizes the unique gifts of African American/Black Catholics. We have one church with many cultures and this is a blessing, but it is also a challenge. African Americans with their innate spirituality can be very instrumental in bringing about that oneness that Jesus prayed for in John, Chapter 17: 20-23.

> I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you Father are in me and I in you that they may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. (NAB).[7]

ENDNOTES

1. New American Bible, St. Joseph's Edition.
2. *Sharing The Old, Old Story: Educational Ministry in the Black Community.* Nathan Jones. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1982.
3. Matthew. 25:40. New American Bible.
4. *What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States.* Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1984.
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6. James 2:17. New American Bible.
7. John 17:20-23. New American Bible.

CHAPTER 7

Inculturation in the Hispanic Cultures

Dr. Frank Lucido

The Hispanic community is characterized by many aspects which contribute to its being open to evangelization and inculturation. I will use the term "Hispanic" in the chapter to refer to those groups that use Spanish as a language for communication. One in four U.S. Catholics is Hispanic in origin and that ratio is quickly moving to one in three.

One of the main considerations for any pastoral minister is to know that within the Hispanic community itself there is great diversity. Hispanic ethnic solidarity is quite fragile because it is ultimately a political creation rather than one based on the real experiences of the groups so labeled. When the term "Hispanic" is used one must be aware that the countries that are identified as being of the Hispanic culture comprise those from the European continent to the Caribbean Sea to South and Central America. There is also much discussion on how people of the Hispanic culture wish to be identified. Some members of the culture want to be called Hispanic; others *Latinos/Latinas*, and still others simply prefer to be identified by their country of origin, such as Colombian, Nicaraguan, Cuban, etc.

Some groups also may have acculturated into the United States and do not want to be known as hyphenated Americans. One must remember that all persons are at various stages of acculturation

and assimilation into the mainstream culture of the United States. This would depend on whether the person and family are first, second, or third generation residents in the United States. This generation issue also makes a difference as to how the Hispanic family wants to be identified. Since there is much diversity in the group, the label, "Hispanic," may not be appropriate for the group.

One of the major characteristics of the culture is the great loyalty to the family. Dedication to the family is always seen as a major commitment in any Hispanic culture. Even though the family is often portrayed as very patriarchal because of the macho stereotype attributed to the Hispanic male, most families are very committed to a strong, matriarchal family structure.[1] The woman of the culture is respected, especially the older woman in the family. Many times the grandmother or extended family assumes the responsibility for the catechetical formation of the children. It is necessary to consider the family member who brings the child for catechetical formation as a valid representation of the family's concern for the child's religious formation. When parental activities are required as part of the catechetical program, consider the grandparents, uncles, or aunts as valid representatives.

For Hispanic families, the way communication is handled is very important. The pastoral minister should show personal interest, inquire about other family members' well-being, and listen attentively. Do not make negative value judgments with your actions or body language. The strength of family ties, family support, and the concern for the extended family are Hispanic family traits that cut across the diversity of the Hispanic culture.

Closeness in the family also has its shadow side. There is an external culture of the macho man and the submissive woman, which fortunately is not always the way married life is lived, but unhappily there are some who get taken up by it. When things go well in the family, it is great because there is a strong sense of belonging, being cared for, and being valued, but when there is conflict it can be horrendous, very painful, and sometimes very hard to resolve since it is hard for people who are very close to each other

to forgive each other when they become alienated.

The Hispanic family is not limited to the nuclear family. Father Virgilio Elizondo notes that another aspect is the *compadres*. This is translated in English as "godparents," but in Spanish the word *com-padres* refers to their function as the co-parents of the children.[2] This idea of *compadrazgo* is a deeply held tradition in the Spanish-speaking community. Often the obligations of godparents are spoken of in the Church, but in the Latino community this seems to be an innate idea.[3]

Family spirituality is strong even though the family may not participate in parish activities and attendance at Sunday liturgy may be sporadic. Many families still have their family home altars. Many of the Hispanic cultures have strong devotion to the Blessed Mother. She is revered under various titles, such as *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (December 12) for the Mexican; *Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre* (November 19) for the Cuban; and *Nuestra Señora de la Divina Providencia* (November 19) for the Puerto Rican culture. The Argentinean culture has devotion to *Nuestra Señora de Lujan*, the Dominicans are devoted to *Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia*, and *Nuestra Señora las Mercedes*, the Guatemalans to Our Lady of the Assumption and the Panamanians to the Immaculate Conception. The Hispanic reverence for the Blessed Mother can be one way through which the Gospel can be inculturated into these cultures.

The Hispanic love of celebration and what Bishop Ricardo Ramirez calls *fiesta*, is another aspect pastoral ministers should consider as they seek to inculturate the Gospel. Moreover, the incorporation of popular religiosity gives pastoral ministers additional opportunities to inculturate the Gospel. In liturgical worship, the *ambiente* (environment) is one of celebration. This involves the incorporation of emotion and music, dance, humor, laughter, the *abrazo* (the embrace) at the sign of peace, contrasting color in decor and vestments in the fashion of the *zarape* (rainbow woven fabric), and plastic arts that convey the presence of grace (including figures of the angels and saints). The pace of liturgy is faster and more animated and a liturgical celebration may involve less than an hour.

During Lent, various foods are prepared to remind the Hispanic family of the need for simplicity and fasting.

In addition, Hispanic devotion to the saints provides further opportunities to use such devotion as moments of evangelization and catechesis. These "teachable moments" can be used by pastoral ministers as a way to explicate for others the importance of these devotions to the Hispanic people. Fiestas such as *Las Posadas* (Twelve Days before Christmas), *Las Pastorelas*, and *Los Tres Reyes* (Feast of the Three Kings) for the Mexican culture; St. Rose of Lima for the Peruvian culture; and Nuestra Señora de Chiquiquira and St. Peter Claver for the Colombian culture, are examples of Hispanic devotion to the saints. Most Hispanic cultures celebrate the Feast of the Three Kings as a major feast day in the liturgical year.

Bishop Ricardo Ramirez in his book, *Fiesta, Worship, and Family*, defines the aspects of popular religiosity that characterize much Hispanic culture. Ramirez defines the concept of popular religiosity as do some sociologists of religion, i.e., as "constellations." The sacramental constellation corresponds to the official doctrine of the Church on the sacraments. The Mexican-American and other Hispanic cultures see the Church as having a mediating role in the administration of the sacraments: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, marriage, and *santos oleos* (the anointing of the sick). Ramirez here also includes burial rites and the *quince años* celebrations. Some Hispanics who have not had church-sanctioned catechetical formation are not able to distinguish between the seven official sacraments and other sacramental acts. The individual Hispanic has a personal relationship with the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Mother, and the saints and souls in purgatory. Their help is often sought, e.g., for forgiveness and mercy, the conversion of a spouse, and the return of a loved one to the family. The constellation of protection is similar to the tradition of belief in miracles.[4]

Hispanics appeal to a saint to obtain his or her favor in life's difficulties. This constellation is expressed through *la manda* (a promise), which often takes the form of *la peregrinacion* (pilgrimage) to the shrine of a saint or holy persons, candles, scapulars,

medals, statues, palms, and the like. The Mexican-American and Hispanics of other cultures seek health, employment, and often, success in romance from the saints. Bishop Ramirez also considers the phenomenon of *curanderismo,* which involves both religion and healing. It includes official Church prayers recited before images of the saints.[5]

Herb treatments, diets, and massages with special ointments are also part of these popular rituals. The *curandero* is considered a holy person in the community, and has, in communities of poor Hispanics, taken the place of the chiropractor or psychologist (whose services are too expensive).

The Rev. Virgilio Elizondo says that, as part of the totality of life, the Latino people accept suffering. It is seen as a way to final happiness. At times, this is analogous to the attitude of fatalism, whereby a person feels helpless in view of the forces that control life. This surrender to *la voluntad de Dios* (God's will) expresses a false humility and unwholesome resignation.[6] Father Edmundo Rodriguez, S.J., in an address in the Diocese of Corpus Christi, notes that the writer Patrick Romanell provides a useful distinction between the Hispanic-American and Anglo-American cultures in his book, *The Making of the Mexican Mind.* Romanell sees Hispanic culture resting on a tragic sense of life, whereas the foundation of Anglo culture is that of an epic sense of life. The tragic sense of life says that moral conflicts within the self will always be there, and that, therefore, suffering is inevitable. The epic sense of life, on the other hand, locates this struggle outside the self: good confronts evil, goals confront obstacles, and happiness can be achieved by destroying evil and conquering obstacles.

The Hispanic culture's long history of hospitality and welcoming is one of its most positive traits. This culture emphasizes the love, compassion, and concern that we, as Christians, are challenged to live. The pastoral minister, in return, must be open and welcoming so that Hispanic people who come in love are made to feel loved. Family solidarity, a sense of celebration, a sense of compassion, acceptance of suffering, strong devotion to the Blessed

Mother and the saints, and a strong participation in popular religiosity are elements common to the various Hispanic cultures discussed here. Hispanics are people of heart and are willing to be empowered to make the Gospel come alive in our Catholic communities.

Endnotes

1 Allan Deck, "Take Note." *Catholic Trends*, 19 August, 2000, p. 2.

2 Rev. Edmundo Rodriguez, S.J., "Hispanic Spirituality." Keynote Presentation at Diocese of Corpus Christi Pastoral Ministries Conference, Corpus Christi, Texas, January, 1995.

3 Virgilio Elizondo, *Christianity and Culture*. San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1999, pp. 152-153.

4 Ricardo Ramirez, CSB, *Fiesta, Worship and Family*. San Antonio: Mexican American Cultural Center, 1981, p. 12.

5 Ramirez., p. 25.

6 Elizondo., *Christianity and Culture*, pp. 132-133.

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Biographical Information

Beatrice Cunningham taught in Catholic schools and was a parish DRE in the Diocese of Galveston-Houston before taking her current position in the diocese as Associate Director in the Office of Continuing Christian Education, where she acts as consultant to the DREs and CREs of the diocese, and especially to the African American Catechetical Leaders. She works on programs to nurture the professional and spiritual growth of DREs and CREs, as well as helping parishes find qualified catechetical leaders. She received her Bachelor of Science from Prairie View A&M University and her Master of Religion Education Degree from St. Thomas University in Houston, Texas. She attended the African American Catholic Ministries Program in Washington, D.C., as well as many other Institutes and workshops dealing with culture and catechesis.

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